1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

LESU[1] is a village on the east coast of New Ireland about eighty miles from the northern end of the island. New Ireland is part of the Bismarck Archipelago and lies approximately between latitude 2° and 4° S. and longitude 150 and 153 E. It is in that part of the South Seas known ethnologically as Melanesia and is now under the political mandate of Australia. The island is long and narrow, about two hundred miles in length and an average width of twenty miles, except at its widest part in the extreme south, where it is approximately fifty miles across. It is divided into nine linguistic districts, in each one of which a different dialect is spoken. These dialects, while related, are not mutually intelligible. The linguistic unit in which I worked was comprised of five villages, Lesu, Ambwa, Langania, Libba, and Tandis, with a total population of about twelve hundred. It covered approximately twelve miles on the east coast north of the centre of New Ireland. I took up my residence in Lesu, which has a population of 232, and there did most of my work, although I visited other villages to attend various rites and secure ethnological information. Occasionally I went to a village in another linguistic district for some special ceremony, but such excursions were infrequent. I spent ten and a half months in Lesu, from March 1929 to February 1930.

When I first arrived, I found a partially completed and

[1] The spelling on Government maps and publications is Lossu. Lesu approximates more closely the phonetic pronunciation of the word by natives. New Ireland was formerly known as Neu Mecklenburg when it belonged to Germany.

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habitable "house kiop," a house built for the use of any visiting Government official on patrol through the island. I moved into it immediately and it was finished after I was in. The house was comfortable, made of wood, with a thatched roof, and contained two rooms and a large porch. One room served as a storeroom and the other as my sleeping-room. I worked and ate on the porch. Several small outhouses, for cooking, for the sleeping quarters of my servants, etc., completed the establishment. From Rabaul, the capital of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, I had brought with me two native servants, an attractive young couple, whose home was in another linguistic district in New Ireland, and who had been working for an Australian Government official in Rabaul. They were therefore trained for my domestic needs and in addition spoke pidgin English. The boy was cook and "shoot boy," bringing down a bird with my gun whenever I wanted one for a meal. His wife worked about the house, did my laundry, and such personal service as cutting my hair. They were well liked in the village, and it is helpful to the anthropologist to have popular servants.

The first few days, while I was getting settled and unpacking equipment, we were almost continuously surrounded by a group of curious and smiling natives. Some of these spoke pidgin English and I was able to converse with them. I explained my purpose in coming to their village, telling them that where I came from (they had never heard of America, and so I drew a map on the sand) "my people" knew nothing about them, and that I had been sent to learn about their customs and mode of life. I showed them anthropological books illustrated with pictures of other

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conversation and gradually began to speak a little myself. I had no interpreter who knew real English. Pidgin English was as far as any of them went. In this area there are always some natives who have worked on coconut plantations or in the white man's capital, and they return with some knowledge of pidgin English. In the very beginning of my stay I worked in pidgin English and through an interpreter. Gradually I learned to speak a little of the native language and understood more, and this knowledge increased with time. I was studying the language to use as a tool rather than for scientific linguistic analysis. In the ten and a half months of my visit I did not learn the language perfectly, or even what I considered nearly perfectly, and so I never trusted absolutely to my knowledge of it. I could participate in native conversations, but for all the important things I did not rely only on myself, but checked up with my best interpreters. For instance, I recorded the speeches at the feasts, but always worked over them afterwards with an interpreter. The natives, however, as is often the case, were under the impression that I knew the language much better than I really did.

A certain amount of work had already been done on New Ireland, mainly by the Germans. Peekel and Kramer are the chief ones who have worked there, and Graebner and Parkinson have also touched upon it in their studies. Most of the information is on the southern and central part of the island, and no anthropologist had been in the linguistic district where I worked. My study tried to delve into the intimate and daily life of the people, and was made from a rather different point of view than that of the German writers. I attempted to study the native life as it was

2: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-30)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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MORTUARY RITES IN NEW IRELAND (BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO)[1]

By HORTENSE POWDERMAKER

121 IN New Ireland death is a most important ritual event and the rites concerning it are of particular psychological interest. The effect of the death on the survivors may be studied from two aspects: first, that of the rites which include the traditional activities of the survivors and the duties between them; second, that dealing with their emotional attitudes. Both are studied in chronological order—at the time of preparation for death, at burial, and after burial. The problem is to ascertain the function of the rites in connection with the emotional attitudes, or more concretely, to find out how the rites meet the psychological situation caused by death.

Among the survivors one distinguishes the clan relatives (in this society, close blood relatives through the female line), acquired relatives (husband or wife) and the rest of the community. Each of these groups is affected somewhat differently by the death and each functions in a different manner. According to their function, the survivors may be divided into mourners and what for want of a better name may be called executives, those responsible for carrying out the rites. Some fall into both groups.

105 Before describing the rites and discussing the problems involved it is necessary to summarize briefly a few ethnological facts which have a bearing on the problem. This Melanesian society is both matrilineal and matrilocal. There are two exogamous moieties, the Eagle and the Hawk, which are subdivided into clans. The local unit is the village, which has a population of several hundred

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● 114 122 [1]The ethnological field work in New Ireland was done under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council in 1929-30. The island is divided into a number of linguistic units and the unit which the writer studied comprised five villages (Lesu, Ambwa, Langania, Libba and Tandis), covering approximately twelve miles on the east coast, about eighty miles from the northern end of the island. The author is now a National Research Fellow (U.S.) under the sponsorship of Professor Clark Wissler.

3: Chinnery G, E-5 (1929) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

Notes on the Study of the Native Population of the East Coast of New Ireland.

114

From time to time during the past twenty years various writers in official and scientific publications have drawn attention to the depopulation that is alleged to be taking place in many parts of Melanesia, including the Territories of Papua and New Guinea governed by Australia—the former as an integral part of the Commonwealth, and the latter under Mandate from the League of Nations. The decline has been attributed to various reasons, and numerous methods for arresting it have been suggested. The authorities do not always agree as to the relative importance of the processes of destruction and restoration outlined for consideration, nor do they produce for examination any comprehensive statistical data on which conditions of the past can be compared with the position to-day. This is especially marked in the discussions on the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, which appear to have been based either on the tables of population appearing from time to time in the Annual Reports (both German and British), or on special investigations of a preliminary nature for which no reliable material has been available for comparing present results with the conditions that existed in past years.

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We hear from persons of long residence, however, that the inhabitants of certain districts now number considerably less than they did in former times, and in some cases these statements are supported to a certain extent by the population tables, compiled from time to time by District Officers on patrol; in other cases so brought to notice, however, the population in some districts appears to be stationary, and in others to be definitely increasing. During the last two or three years most of the missions operating in the Territory have sent yearly returns of births and deaths to the Department of Native Affairs, and these have assisted the Administration to keep in touch with conditions in the areas concerned.

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It is the expressed policy of the Government of New Guinea to do all things possible to further the moral and material welfare of the natives of the Territory, and for some years the departmental officials charged with the execution of this policy, e.g., the staff in Native Affairs, District Administration, Agriculture, Health, and other departments, have extended their organizations as widely as the means at their disposal would allow, to meet the ever increasing obligations undertaken by the

[p. 3] [p. 1 & 2 contain no text]

3:Chinnery G, E-5 (1929)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

439 goods. Each year this economic bond between European and native residents grows stronger, and the two racial interests become more interdependent.

651 The native inhabitants pay taxes to the Government, and keep
491 150 miles of road between Kavieng and Karu in proper order for motor traffic, each village group being responsible for its own section.

797 These are some of the principal developments in the material life
177 of the people as a result of European settlement. On the cultural and social life, chiefly due to mission influence, additional far-reaching changes have taken place, and these increase as the missions expand. Two mission organizations are now operating in the district—Roman Catholic and Methodist. The principal Roman Catholic stations are at Lemakot, Munuwai and Lemasong, and those of the Methodist Mission are at Maiom and Pinigindu.

177 The progress of European organizations has transformed the life
182 of the natives, whose indigenous institutions have either died out or, like the *malagans*, are tottering to extinction with scarcely a hope of surviving the present generation. The people of coming generations will have to fit into the social and religious fabric being woven for them by the driving force of European industrial, religious and administrative control now thoroughly established in the district.

● 114 With the object of making the survey in question, I left Rabaul
121 on Saturday, 23rd March, 1929, and on Monday, the 25th March, commenced work in the villages between Kavieng and Karu. Completing the preliminary census on the 11th May, I came back to Rabaul to tabulate my notes, and, this done, returned to the east coast villages, where I remained from the 1st June until the 26th June, investigating special phenomena indicated by the tables.

121 Thus the work was divided into two parts, firstly, an enumeration of the population in their villages, and, secondly, an investigation of the figures together with social and religious features seemingly of value to the issue.

125 A specimen of the form used in recording the names and demographic features of the inhabitants is appended. (Appendix 1.) In regard to the actual method, however, a generalized explanation is necessary.

361 The inhabitants live in small family settlements along the coast-line,
621 excepting mountain and forest groups, who reside in the bush. Each settlement has its own small plot of land, clumps of coco-nut trees, and two or three living houses. They are scattered along the whole coast-line a few yards or 100 yards or so apart, according to the political boundaries and space available. A group of several family settlements forms a political division, which is administered by the Government with the aid of local natives of influence and repute, who are appointed Lulual and Tul-tul and officiate under the supervision of the District Officer according to authority set out in the Native Administration

3:Chinnery G, E-5 (1929)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

GENERAL.

114 161 In German times the declining condition of the population caused the Government considerable alarm. In the Annual Report for 1907-08, it is pointed out that "the native population of the Bismarck Archipelago is decreasing in parts so rapidly that the fact is recognizable even without exact statistical reports. The grounds for the decrease of the population have not been definitely discovered for any of the districts concerned. The following, however, come into consideration:—Migration, especially resulting from recruiting of labourers: disease, especially epidemics; sexual diseases and the consequent decrease of birth-rate; abortion, and artificially-produced sterility; unproductiveness in consequence of degeneration and in-breeding."

Again, in 1910-11, the Annual Report calls attention to the misfortune that there is still evidence of a rapid decrease in the population of the whole of New Ireland.

114 161 177 In July, 1912, Dr. Hoffmann conducted a medical survey embracing the population of Kavieng, and its surroundings as far down the east coast as the village of Pinigindu. In the report of this survey he states that the retrogression of the population is very alarming, and that, if it goes on, the extinction of the population is in sight. He points out that it was shocking during the inspection to find how many long-standing marriages were childless, and how small was the issue in the fruitful marriages investigated. Hoffmann draws special attention to the deleterious effects that a native population suffers through the contact with the higher European civilized population, pointing out that the conditions of native life are thereby almost completely altered, that old customs lose their foundations, and with the introduction of trade and progress a complete revolution sets in, which must unsettle the native mind. He says there is scarcely a district which has not experienced more or less interruptive changes. He considers that the native, who formerly had need of a rising generation capable of fighting, now no longer sees the necessity for a virile posterity whose working capabilities can only benefit the European. He points out that all these disadvantages work subconsciously in the native mind, without any ultimate advantage ever entering his head. The change, being too sudden, results first of all in a retrogression of the people who have more or less lapsed into *taedium vitae*. What then is required, he suggests, is making the transition easy to accustom people to new conditions, to strengthen them, to guard them from illness, to improve their general conditions of living and so bring them a fresh lease of life. He questions the possible success even of this, but states that it must be tried even at

3: Chinnery G, E-5 (1929) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

the risk of a large expenditure and the abandonment of less pressing tasks. The section ends with a statement that, without a population capable of working, New Guinea is practically useless as a tropical colony.

After going into the diseases indicated during his examination, and relating the toll they had taken on the population, he summarizes briefly the opinions formed by his examination, and then submits under three headings certain measures for the adjustment of the problem, the most important of which actually agrees with what is now being done by the New Guinea Public Health Organization.

PRESENT MEDICAL CONTROL.

The villages along the road and mountains are regularly patrolled by the medical staff at Kavieng. Some of the planters and the missionaries treat any sick natives that are brought to them, and in addition to this a native medical Tul-tul is stationed in nearly every village, with a stock of medicine which he has been trained to use.

SUGGESTIONS.

The regeneration of the population of the east coast of New Ireland is, apart from administrative reasons, of the greatest importance to every European residing in the district, and from what I have seen of the missionaries and planters they can be relied upon to play their part in any scheme with this end in view.

A large part of tthe district lies too far from Kavieng to be effectively controlled by the present medical organization; and the excellent medical patrol system, which is doing so much good in a general way for the native population cannot possibly be expected to cope with the special conditions that affect the issue and survival rates of the community. What is required, therefore, is an examination of the district by a qualified and experienced medical officer, with the object of submitting a report on the most practical way of dealing with the problem.

A second factor in the scheme of regeneration is to improve the general conditions of native life, and study carefully anything standing in the way of welfare with the object of introducing necessary changes.

The primary factor in this scheme is sympathetic and thorough local administration. The present system of village control by Luluais and Tul-tuls under the supervision of district officials is a step in the right direction, provided the natives appointed by the Government are men acceptable to the villagers themselves, and represent adequately the various social groups into which the people are divided. No scheme of local administration, however, can possibly function satisfactorily

4: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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VITAL STATISTICS OF NEW IRELAND (Bismarck Archipelago) AS REVEALED IN GENEALOGIES

BY HORTENSE POWDERMAKER[1]

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INTRODUCTION

121 The purpose of the following study was to obtain birth and death rates which would show whether the native population is declining and, if it is, whether the decline is due to a low birth rate, a high mortality rate, or both. Sex ratios at birth and at the time of reproduction were also obtained.

121 114 The statistics were collected in a Melanesian community in New Ireland, (one of the islands in the Bismarck Archipelago and part of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea) where the writer lived for ten months. One linguistic unit, consisting of five villages on the east coast, about eighty miles from the northern end of the island, provided the material for the ethnological research. The villages were Ambwa, Lesu,[2] Langania, Libba and Tandis, and their total population is approximately 1,200. Residence was established in the village of Lesu, with a population of 222, and the bulk of the statistics were collected there.

METHOD

[126] Four hundred and fifty-five women and their offspring are the basis of the study. The statistics were collected by the genealogical method and figures for three generations were thus obtained. The results show 121 the trend for approximately the last hundred years. The genealogical method serves as a means for the comparison of age groups. Among a

[122] [1] The ethnological field work was done in 1929-1930, under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council and the author is now a Fellow of the National Research Council (U. S.), under the sponsorship of Dr. Clark Wissler.

[2] The spelling on government publications is Lossu. The spelling used in this text more closely approximates the native pronunciation of the word.

4: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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to about sixteen, and by young manhood and womanhood is meant the time between the end of youth and the early twenties. These, of course, are only generalizations.

Since the main object is to determine infant and childhood mortality rates, and survival rates at the time of reproduction, death rates are calculated only for the period up to marriage. The point is to find out how many people survive until the time when they can reproduce themselves. It must therefore be remembered that the total number of deaths is always the total number occurring before marriage. Moreover, in the genealogical method, where in one classification all the principals are dead, this is the only feasible procedure.

It is obvious that there will be a certain amount of error in any vital statistics collected among a people where there are no records of birth and death, but the importance of real and classificatory relatives, the rather formalized pattern of behavior between them, and the elaborate pregnancy, birth, and death rites, and interclan marriages, enables a Melanesian native to give a fairly accurate genealogy. It may be also that the very absence of written records throws a heavier burden upon the individual's memory, which he does not shirk. But it is obvious that no matter how good the memory of Melanesian informants, errors in these data must exist. They are, however, in the nature of the material and would probably exist in any study made on a similar primitive people. As far as possible, these errors are indicated in the description of the tables, which, it should be understood, denote general trends rather than exact statements. The genealogical method, while taking much more time than the census method, enables one to separate the subjects into age groups and presents a more comprehensive prospective over a longer period of time. But because of the great amount of detailed work and time involved in the use of this method, it is only practical for a small unit of people.

The nearest comparable figures are those of the recent government census taken in 1929 for a part of the east coast of New Ireland (from Kavieng to the village of Karu, approximately 147 miles beginning at the northern end of the island) and which includes over a larger area the people designated in this study as generations II, III, IV, but excludes those in generation I (the dead).[4] The results of the government

[4] Chinnery, E. W. P.—*Anthropological Report*, No. 6, Territory of New Guinea. In print.

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working on coconut plantations. Among the adults there were six widowers and seven widows (mostly old). There was thus a total population of 222 (eleven of whom were absent) living in 66 households.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Birth Data

Table 1, which follows, presents the average number of offspring for all women and for each fruitful woman for three generations. As noted earlier, the females studied were divided into four groups according to their generation, those called *I* being dead, *II* old, *III* middle-aged, and *IV* young. The last group is omitted from the following table because the women are too young to have completed their childbearing period. Those unions in which the marriage was of short duration because of divorce or the death of the husband, (and no record was found of the woman's subsequent re-marriage), and those in which the woman died before the end of her childbearing period are omitted. The number of the former are 17 and the latter 23.

TABLE 1

Birth Rates

GENERATION	TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN	NUMBER OF OFFSPRING	AVERAGE NUMBER OF OFFSPRING PER WOMAN	NUMBER OF FRUITFUL WOMEN	AVERAGE NUMBER OF OFFSPRING PER FRUITFUL WOMAN
I	150	431	2.8 ± .119	142	3.
II	90	194	2.1 ± .159	74	2.6
III	55	150	2.7 ± .26	44	3.4
Totals	295	775	2.6	260	2.9

From the above table it appears that the people studied have had a practically stable birth rate for three generations: an average for the three groups of 2.6 per woman and 2.9 per fruitful woman. This is slightly higher than the rate given in the recent government census, the average issue per union being given there as 2.0 and per fruitful union as 2.7.[6] If the issue rate of generations *II* and *III* (which cor-

[6] Chinnery, E. W. P.—Anthropological Report, No. 6, Territory of New Guinea. In print.

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responds more closely to the people on whom the government census was taken) is averaged, the difference between that and the rate given in the census is even less.[1] Since there is such close agreement between the figures computed by two different methods, it would seem that the issue rate, at least for the women of generations *II* and *III*, is fairly accurate. But there are no comparable figures for the issue rate of the women in generation *I*, and it is here that there is the largest possibility of error, because the principals are dead and could not be used as informants.

If the women of all three generations are classified according to their number of offspring, as in the following table (No. 2), it will be seen that the birth rate for the larger number of women is slightly higher than the average rate as given in Table 1.

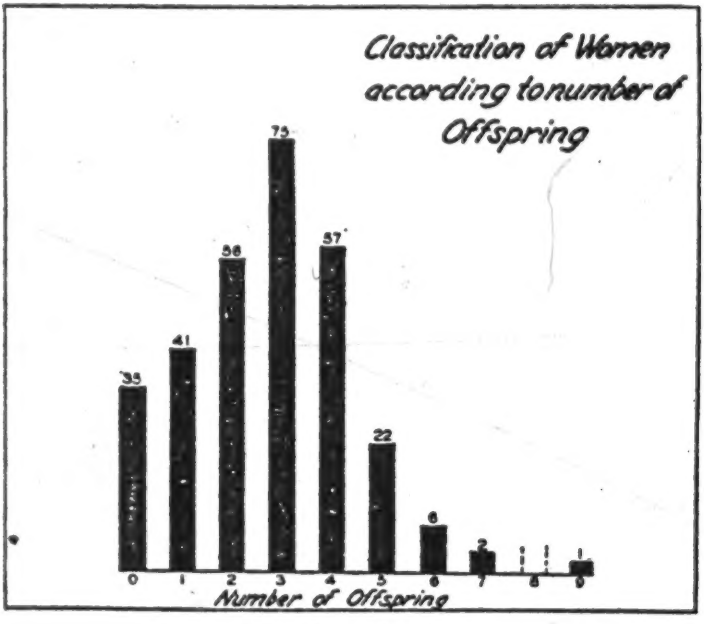

CHART I

[1] The difference is 0.4 per woman and 0.3 per fruitful woman.

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161 the statistics in this paper are based is a small unit in this declining people.

By the use of the genealogical method in a study of 455 women, it was possible to compare one generation or age group with another. It was found that there has been an increase in deaths before marriage during the last three generations, and that this increase has taken place during infancy. Since the birth rate is small and not increasing, it is evident that these people must be declining in population.

114 To discover why more deaths are occurring in infancy is not easy. The causes of death are not known to the natives and there is no gov-
165 ernment station near enough for any autopsies to be made. All one can do in addition to presenting the factual material is to point out the non-existence of certain causes and to posit, very tentatively, any possible ones. Such factors as feeding and the care of the infant may be ruled out. The infant receives the same care and the same food today that he did three generations ago. The fact that an infant only a few days old is given baked taro to eat happened also several generations ago. Also, there has been no change in the habits of work, or the manner of living in general, for the pregnant woman and for the mother while she is nursing her infant. At birth, there was in the past and still is today, a dependence on the skill of a few native women. The report of a conference called by the Commissioner for Native Affairs and attended by the Director of Public Health and by the representatives of Mission Stations in the Territory, seems to the writer to be quite erroneous in regard to the causes for an increase in infant mortality. The conference was of the opinion "that the high rate of infant mortality is due to:

(*a*) The too early marriage of many women.
(*b*) Undernourishment and improper feeding of infants.
(*c*) Undernourishment of people generally, due to an ill-balanced diet, and in some cases to food shortage.
(*d*) A lack of cleanliness on the part of those handling and feeding infants.
(*e*) Epidemics, e. g., whooping cough.
(*f*) Infanticide." [27]

It has already been shown that for the people on whom this study is made, the conditions indicated by a, b, c, d are exactly the same now as

[27] Report to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea, from July 1st, 1926 to the 30th of June, 1927, *Canberra*, p. 115.

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they were in the past, and that while they may be a cause for a high rate of infant mortality they cannot be considered as a cause for an increase in the rate. Epidemics might reasonably be a factor, and there was an influenza epidemic in 1918 and a famine in 1914, due to drought, in New Ireland. There is no record of how many deaths, or the ages of those dying from either influenza or the famine, so that they can only be considered in a general way. The last cause mentioned by the conference, namely infanticide, does not exist now and did not in the past, as far as one was able to observe, among the people on whom this study is based.

Psychological causes for a decline in native populations have been suggested by W. H. R. Rivers and G. H. L. Pitt-Rivers. The former, in his discussion of the conditions which have affected increasing death rates and decreasing birth rates, mentioned the following: the introduction of diseases, of alcohol and opium, of firearms, of European garments, of modified housing, and finally, modifications and interferences with native customs.[28] Dr. Rivers emphasized the last point particularly and believed that the destruction of native institutions deprived the natives of their interest in life. Continuing his discussion of the increasing death rates, he said, "The special point I wish to make in my contribution to this book is that interest in life is a primary factor in the welfare of a people. The new diseases and poisons, the innovations in clothing, housing and feeding, are only the immediate causes of mortality. It is the loss of interest in life underlying these more obvious causes which give them their potency for evil and allows them to work such ravages upon life and health." [29] When he considered the decline in birth rates he again emphasized the significance of mental factors, and thought that the same loss of interest in life might be of importance in

[28] Rivers, W. H. R., Essay, "The Psychological Factor," in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, edited by the same author, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 89-95. Alcohol, opium and firearms are not used by the natives of this study. The men now wear loin cloths when formerly they were naked, and have acquired a consciousness of their bodies which they lacked in the past. The women wear loin cloths also, instead of the straw aprons formerly worn, and they are supposed to wear blouses. The blouse comes off when they are working, and frequently at other times too. Dr. Rivers' point that the natives keep their bodies clean, but not their acquired clothing, applies to these people. The houses have not been modified by European influence. The other two factors, the introduction of diseases and the modification of native customs, are discussed in the text.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

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121 accounting for it. He wrote, "We have here only another effect of the loss of interest in life which I have held to be so potent in enhancing mortality. The people say themselves: 'Why should we bring children into the world only to work for the white man?' " [30]

Pitt-Rivers has emphasized still more strongly the influence of psychological factors from another point of view and suggests that the destruction of cultural institutions such as magic, economic structure, etc., results in boredom or loss of the *joie de vivre*, which in turn might operate to exterminate a race.[31] He thinks that even though there be normal sexual intercourse, the woman might not conceive because her emotional life had been disturbed, which he would trace to the break up of the native culture through white contact.[32]

105 The writer of this paper would not deny the possible influence of
114 these psychological factors when they were operative, but the point is
121 that the psychological factors mentioned by Dr. Rivers and by Pitt-
177 Rivers are not present among the people on whom this study was made
182 and therefore cannot be adduced as a cause for their decline. The fundamental aspects of the native culture have not been broken up, and these people are not bored, nor have they lost their *joie de vivre*. Although there has been a fair amount of white contact, and cannibalism and warfare have been abolished by the mandated government, their kinship organization, economic structure, ritual and sexual life, are still actively functioning according to their traditional custom. The people are busy with their daily work (gardening and fishing) and with preparations for the many ritual feasts and dances. They flirt, marry, and have their *affaires du coeur* in a very happy, casual fashion and do not, as Dr. W. H. R. Rivers suggests, ask themselves why they should bring children into the world. They are, as far as can be observed, quite happy, decidedly not bored, and have a real interest in life.

177 The psychological factors mentioned by the two authors just quoted may be operative on the generation of children now growing up. Many of these have been to mission schools, where they are given the concept of shame in connection with sexual matters, particularly in regard to extra-marital intercourse, which is a very indigenous part of their culture. White contacts are increasing and it is probably only a matter of time before the native culture will be broken up. What the

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[31] Pitt-Rivers, G. H. L. F.—*The Clash of Cultures*, London, 1927, pp. 142-148.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

5: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1932 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

FEASTS IN NEW IRELAND; THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF EATING[1]

By HORTENSE POWDERMAKER

121 EATING has an important social function among any people. Groups of people eating together on a particular occasion, whether it be a mortuary feast in a primitive society or a birthday dinner party in our own culture, illustrate the point that eating is a social institution as well as an individual physiological necessity. In the primitive society of New Ireland, social life in its ritual, and in many of its non-ritual aspects also, centered around feasts. This term includes not only those occasions when food is eaten communally, but also when it is only distributed, and in this paper denotes any communal rite (and non-ritual occasion) centering around food. The two most important communal events are dances and feasts. Only the latter are being considered in this paper.

Social Function of Eating

The communal eating of food and customs concerning it may be said to have a double social function: (1) to maintain the cohesion of the society and of groups within it; (2) to determine, in part, the relation of the individual to the society and to the smaller groups within it. The psychological theory underlying the first function is that society maintains its existence by a system of sentiments which are given collective expression on ritual occasions.[2] In this society the most frequent of these are feasts.

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114 [1] This article is based on an ethnological study of a Melanesian society on the island of New Ireland in the Bismarck Archipelago. The author lived for ten months in the village of Lesu (phonetic spelling; the spelling on government maps is Lossu) on the east coast about eighty miles from the northern end of the island, and attempted a rather intensive study of a relatively small group of people, one linguistic unit of five villages each with a population of between two and three hundred, covering an area of ten or twelve miles. The research was conducted under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council, and the author is now preparing the material for publication as a Fellow of the National Research Council (United States), under the sponsorship of Dr. Clark Wissler.

[2] Professor Radcliffe-Brown has expounded this theory in The Andaman Islanders (Cambridge, 1922). He says pp. 233, 234: "(1) A society depends for its existence on the presence in the minds of its members of a certain system of sentiments (an organized system of emotional tendencies centered about some object) by which the conduct of the individual is regulated in conformity with the needs of the society. (2) Every feature of the social system itself and every event or object that in any way affects the well-being or the cohesion of the society becomes an object of this system of sentiments. (3) In human society the sentiments in question are not innate but are developed in the individual by the action of the society upon him.